7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

THE ROSE

When a women is about to give birth to a child she sends to one of her neighbours for the loan of a withered flower called the "Passion Flower" which is put at once into the water. As soon as the flower opens the woman is delivered of the child. 844 824

It is true that the rose opens after it has remained in the water for some time, although quite withered, but the fanaticism of some of our people is really excessive. A certain man relates that his wife was about to be confined and one of the neighbours brought her a passion flower, in the confusion, however, that prevailed at the moment, the withered flower was thrown into a drawer and they forgot all about it.

Shortly after the woman was delivered of three sons. The flower, however, was not to be seen.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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824 One of the inmates then remembered that it was left in a drawer. What was his astonishment, on opening that drawer, to find that on the stem of the withered flower were brought forth *three* branches covered with leaves!!!

THE EVIL EYE

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755 Many of our people believe in the evil eye, and are of opinion that there are individuals who possess the power of inflicting injury by merely looking on those whom they wish to harm. It is, however, believed that any one who has been influenced by the evil eye of another, must procure a piece of cloth from the dress of the person by whom he has been fascinated, burn it, and expose himself to the smoke of it and

8:Brockman T-5 (no date) 1938
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178 795 so fervently Christian. The reason lies, perhaps, in their Catholicism. The Faith has a tolerant and not unfriendly eye for many of the Old Things. It is hard to think of St. Francis being unkind to a leprechaun.

The savants make much argument about Malta's folklore. The wish being often father to their able reasoning, they will prove from it that the Maltese are Phoenician or Arab or Italian with equal conviction. Like the Cornishman who will tell you that the Hobby Horse was invented to frighten away the French, the people themselves know little if anything of the reasons why certain tales are told, certain things done; but, from birth to grave, the Old Things—often recognisable, but always with their peculiar Maltese twist—make intermittent appearances in the lives of Zeppu[1] and Grez.[1]

Some of them even have so far won the good opinion of Mother Church as to be granted a place in her own ceremonies.

ON GETTING BORN

● 844 824 The Maltese baby—boy or girl—gets born with very little fuss, and is always welcome. In Gozo, or in what remains of country, some friend of the mother will assist the arrival of the little one, bringing into the house with her the withered bud of a certain rose. The flower is placed in water and slowly opens. At the moment of its fullest opening the child is born.

844 824 191 Here is clearly a very ancient magic. The association of the rose with Motherhood, with Life, and indeed with Godhead itself, is as old as time. In the Litany of Loretto, the Virgin Mother is invoked as "Rosa Mystica"—"Mystical Rose." Dante saw the innermost circle of the heavenly spheres as a rose. The Brahmins, the Persians, and the Jews all attached

844 824 a high mystic symbolism to the rose. The simple peasant, setting her rosebud in water, little knows what forgotten gods

[1] Popular personifications of the peasant and his wife.

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she honours and calls upon in her sister's hour of need. The tale is told of the birth-rose which was forgotten. Triplets were born. Later the rose was found, having grown on its withered stem three healthy branches bearing fresh, green leaves. Whatever deep significance attached originally to the birth-rose, the custom has a beauty of its own.

The next thought is for the little one's future. A gold ring or some other golden object is placed in the water in which he or she is washed, in order, they say, that riches will not be lacking. At one time, it may be, something of more value than the dross of riches was sought, for gold was the symbol of wisdom and a bright understanding long before it had value as currency.

It will be well if the baby is not red-headed, for the red-headed child will inevitably be known as "Son of the Wind," "Daughter of the alcove," or even more scurrilously, "Child of the priest." This readiness to doubt the paternity of poor little "Copper-knob" seems to indicate that, in spite of the blue or grey eyes of the peasants, the Maltese have always been an essentially brunette people. The slur may be no older than the occupation of the priestly knights, when celibacy must frequently have proved too much for the young "Aryans" of the Teutonic Langues. It may date back to the much earlier time of red-bearded Ullyses. It may, again, be nothing more than a rendering of "love-child"—for red has always been the colour of Love—sacred to Astoreth, Isis, and Venus.

Yet another of the Old Things has a hand in birth. Even to-day it is accounted by some a serious matter for a child to be born on Christmas Eve. Such a child is in danger of becoming a *Gaugau*—one whose spirit will leave its body every Christmas Eve—"They then go out and wander all over the island frightening people with their groanings. After thus performing these ghostly pranks for some hours,